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Oral History Project of Colton, CA - 11/5/13

Dr. Tom Rivera: Good morning, my name is Dr. Tom Rivera. I am the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies – Emeritus. Emeritus means that I retired a couple of years ago. Today is November the 5th, 2013, and we're located at the Pfau Library, room PL-4005. And with us this morning is the Director, the Dean of the Library, Mr. Cesar Caballero. And Cesar, before I start the interview, would you tell us a little bit of what we're doing as far as this South Colton project is concerned? It's the oral history of South Colton.

Dean Caballero: Thank you Tom. Yes, the Colton Oral History Project is a project that we have done in order to document the rich history and importance of Colton to the history of this area. And we intend to interview residents as well as leaders in the community to document that history.

Dr. Rivera: Thank you, thank you, Cesar. And it is an important project—we've been working on it for several months, now, and it's finally come to...

Dean Caballero: ...A good start.

Dr. Rivera: Why don't we get started this morning? This morning we have Mr. and Mrs. Ayala: Sal Ayala, and his wife, Francis Ayala, both are residents of Colton. Sal has been a resident of Colton for many years because he was born and raised on Colton. So, Sal, welcome, welcome this morning and Francis welcome this morning, and thank you for being with us this morning.
Why don't we get started Sal. First of all, tell me, were you born and raised in Colton?

Sal Ayala: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: When? *Cuando?*

Sal Ayala: February 17th, 1925.

Dr. Rivera: *Que estas viejo?*

Sal Ayala: Yes, 88 years old.

Dr. Rivera: 88 years old?

Sal Ayala: I can't switch them...

Dean Caballero: *Un poquito...*

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Now, what about Mom and Dad? When did your Mom and Dad come to Colton?

Sal Ayala: My father was born in Guanajuato, Mexico; my mother was born in Jalisco, Mexico. According to the map, it's about 300 miles apart, but they met in Colton. It took them 3,500 miles to meet. I don't know why, I don't know how they made it because my dad was secretive. He never wanted to share anything about his home family.

Dr. Rivera: When did he come to Colton?

Sal Ayala: I figured that he came to Colton early 1905.

Dr. Rivera: 1905?

Sal Ayala: Yeah. He was 15 years old, and I suppose that he walked across the border because back then it was an open border. I think he said that they only paid 25

cents to cross the border... You could go back and come back again [and pay] another 25 cents. So it was no immigration...

Dr. Rivera: It was easy then – it was easy. Why did he come to Colton?

Sal Ayala: He was an orphan. His mother died and his father married another lady; so the lady was very cruel to him. So he just left; and I don't know how he got to El Paso – maybe he walked – I don't know what type of transportation but he got to El Paso [and] somehow he ended up in Crestmore, which is Rubidoux / Riverside.

Dr. Rivera: In Crestmore he worked for the cement plant? Did he work for the cement plant in Crestmore?

Sal Ayala: He worked for the Crestmore Cement Plant; probably a laborer breaking rock up on the hill. In the meantime, he worked with his future father-in-law, and I imagine that's the way that they got acquainted because they felt sorry for him because he was an orphan... I don't know, somebody felt sorry for him and he was living somewhere.

Dr. Rivera: So, that's how he met your Mom, then?

Sal Ayala: I imagine that he met my Mom because he knew my Grandfather, which is my Mom's father; and then, somehow they ended up in Colton, I would say about 1909, 1912.

Dr. Rivera: 1909, 1912? So your family has been in Colton a long, long time?

Sal Ayala: Yes, yes. We had 10 brothers and sisters: and 2 died in infancy. The first one was born in 1917, a boy, and the second was in 1920, the third was a little girl, Matilda – 1923, and then, myself in 1925, and then another girl, Frances – 1921, and then the first boy, [who] died. And then, Rosafina... I could have wrote this down...

Dr. Rivera: No, no, don't worry about it.

Dean Caballero: You have a sharp memory.

Dr. Rivera: He does, he does.

Sal Ayala: Another boy died in infancy... so there were 8 survivors.

Dr. Rivera: All 8 altogether. Where did you live in Colton?

Sal Ayala: We lived in a one room.

Francis Ayala: Where? Where in Colton?

Sal Ayala: On Maple Street, south of—next to the Santa Fe railroad tracks. And we lived there until I got married. I lived with my parents until I got married.

Dr. Rivera: Maple Street is just south of 7th Street, or so...

Sal Ayala: Yeah, south of the Santa Fe railroad tracks.

Dr. Rivera: Where did you go to school?

Sal Ayala: I went to school at Garfield. In kindergarten in 1931. So it was 1931 until the 5th grade. And then, one year somehow they got the 5th grade Mexican-American kids... they integrated them in the Lincoln School, the old Lincoln School...

Dr. Rivera: Where the City Hall is now?

Sal Ayala: Yes, yes.

Dr. Rivera: Okay. Now, you went to Wilson, and after Wilson you graduated and went to Colton High School?

Sal Ayala: Yes. I went up to the junior [year] and then I went into the service. So I didn't graduate then. But I got my diploma when I came back; I put in for it and I took the exams.

Francis Ayala: He took the tests they take and then he got his diploma.

Dr. Rivera: So you were in the Navy before you graduated from high school.

Sal Ayala: Yes, that was during World War II.

Dr. Rivera: World War II?

Sal Ayala: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: And how long were you in the service?

Sal Ayala: Totally 4 years and 3 months. I was in the Second World War, and then, I came out, and 90 days later I reenlisted again. So I put in 22 months extra afterwards... in the Peace Navy.

Dr. Rivera: Wow—and that's a long time.
And now, Francis, where were your parents from?

Francis Ayala: My parents are from Mexico from a little town called Mezquital del Oro, Zacatecas. It's a mining area, mining town, that's where I was born, too. And they came back, and my father had been here before, and he went back to Mexico—married my mother and then came to a little... it was a ranch: The Diamond Bar... canyon... Then, they went back to Mexico, and my brother and I were born there; and

we all immigrated back in 1926. I was just a few months old, I was born in 1925, May 11, 1925. And [we] lived in Fontana. After several years, my father died; later on, my mother remarried to a man called Salvador Robles. And we lived in Beaumont, Anaheim, and from Anaheim we came to Colton in 1942, November 17th, 1942. Because of the war, they wanted him, he was a section foreman for Southern Pacific, to be living in Colton because of the main line, and he had a lot more responsibility...

Dr. Rivera: This is your father or step-father?

Francis Ayala: My step-father. Yes, my father died and was buried in the Mission at Saint Gabriel. So that's how I happened to come here to Colton; but I was actually raised in Fontana.

In the 2nd grade in school... when I came here to Colton, I went to register my brothers in school, and I came to Lincoln School because a section happened to be on this side of the railroad where Mount Vernon came to an end. And Mr. Bailey, who was the Principal, meets me at the hallway and says: What are you doing here? You don't belong here. I said, I came to register my brothers in school. Well you don't belong here, go to South Colton, go over there. And I was dumb-founded!

I was happy because we had moved, and I registered them at Wilson—not Wilson—it was Garfield; and two of my brothers were already in junior high school.

Dr. Rivera: And, Francis, what year was that when you tried to register them at Lincoln? It was the north-side of Colton.

Francis Ayala: That was in November '42.

Dr. Rivera: So they said, you better go to Wilson, or Garfield, Garfield, and you went to Garfield and registered your two brothers?

Francis Ayala: Yes. So they went to Garfield, and of course, my sister and I were in high school—my step-sister and I, so we went to high school...

Dr. Rivera: Well, before we get into that, tell me about that wonderful love story that, you-know, people say that there is love at first sight—there's love at first sight...

Sal Ayala: She doesn't believe me...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: And this is what happened at Colton High School; Sal, tell us what happened when you saw Francis.

Sal Ayala: Okay. It was junior year; and the first period was study hall up on the second floor in the main building. At the end of the second period, I was coming down and out to the front, and I was going to the algebra room, and I seen these two girls parking the curb in a 1941 Pontiac, white... and they were walking; and Francis had on a white blouse and a brown skirt, and white boots. And, boy-I-tell-ya', it was about 50 feet... and somehow, something clicked in here (he points to his head) – that girl's different. So I just left and went to class. And then, later on I got to see her in school; and I never talked to her, but I managed to write two notes to her; she never answered.

Dr. Rivera: Francis! You never answered.

Francis Ayala: I didn't know who he was.

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: So, the last day of that year we had the annuals, so I got brave enough—so I went over to ask her if she would sign it for me.

Dean Caballero: And the rest is history...

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: That was the beginning...

Dr. Rivera: That was the beginning?

Sal Ayala: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: And then you went into the service?

Sal Ayala: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Did you keep in touch? Or, *que paso?*

Sal Ayala: I wrote to her, I'd write to her and she never answered. So I came back in August of '45 just before the war was over. So I went home, and I knew I wanted to see her but I didn't how because her mother was very strict: no dating, that's it. She happened to have a girlfriend in high school that lived about four doors from where we lived. So she drove over to Toni's house, that's a girl, and she said: Francis, do you know Salvador is here from the service? Well, let's go say 'hi' to him... I don't know I wasn't there. So they went to my house, and then, Toni had gone off and... Did she come out, my mom? (Sal asking Francis)

Francis Ayala: Your mother? No.

Sal Ayala: Anyway, they left, you-know, and when I came home they told me: Francis Murro was over here. So I tried more to see her... I finally got in touch.

Dr. Rivera: He was persistent wasn't he?

Dean Caballero: Yes, very persistent...

Dr. Rivera: He wasn't going to give up.

(Laughter)

Dean Caballero: I have a question about your time in the service. While in the Navy, during the war years, did you see some action?

Francis Ayala: Did you see action during the war?

Sal Ayala: Yes, our ship in the first invasion we took Marines from Camp Pendleton. And our ship was the largest landing ship at that time; and we carried Marines; there was above five thousand Marines on our ship – fully packed. We invaded the Marshall Islands: that was February 1, 1944. You-know, we were at war—it was like a dream, you-know, like a nightmare. I didn't know what was happening... guns firing... Anyway, we unloaded the Marines and they landed; and of course, the big ship was over there landing shells to the island. They did it from 5 o'clock in the morning until about 10 o'clock – 5 hours without stopping. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The whole fleet was there, it was about 200 ships: battleships, cruisers, destroyers, landing craft, everything, everything. But you had to do your job, you just do your job and don't mind anything else. So everybody was doing their job.

Dr. Rivera: What was your job, Sal?

Sal Ayala: I was in a little ball with 5 sailors. There was 2 on each: the bow and the stern, and the helmsman, and the engineer. And, of course, they had the 30 millimeter guns on each side – I was in the well-deck with a 30 ton tank with 5 Marines in there. And so, we had loaded it and it would start going around like that (he motions in a circular manner)... When they gave the signal, okay go on, everybody would start going... and you see what looked like firecrackers but they were shooting at us. I said what are those things doing... they said they're shooting at you...

(Laughter)

Dean Caballero: You were in a landing craft...

(Laughter)

Dean Caballero: You must have been in a landing craft.

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: They would tell the Marines: okay, as soon as you hit the beach the ramp in front is going down and the tank is gonna go up.

Dean Caballero: Amphibian crafts.

Were there a lot of Mexicanos on your boat?

Sal Ayala: There was, I think, there was 6 Mexicanos out of 400... and I kept in touch with 2 of them still: one who lives in Fort Worth, Texas, other lives in Hacienda, but they used to be from Arizona. We go to reunions every two years. But the first one took 53 years to go.

Dean Caballero: Really?

Sal Ayala: We were all men when we met. Consequently, I got 100% disability: hearing – because of these five guys that wrote letters verifying that indeed I was in a 40 millimeter gun tank as a second loader. I used to get the clips, and after the first loader, he would drop them in the (inaudible)... we did that in Okinawa...

Dr. Rivera: Sal, out of Colton, out of the city of Colton, we had approximately 400 – 397 people, young men that fought in World War II. Did you ever join any of the posts, like the Fidel Hernandez post? I don't know what the number is, but, were you part of that group that got together afterwards?

Sal Ayala: The American Legions?

Dr. Rivera: Yes, the American Legions.

Francis Ayala: Where you worked to get it, the post Hernandez, you worked to get it started...

Sal Ayala: The American Legion post in North Colton, 155, was in the First World War. And one of the gentleman contacted one of the fellows in South Colton [to find out] if they would be interested in starting a post. Well it was dormant, they couldn't get the necessary people to join. You gotta have a certain amount: 10 members or so, they couldn't get it... So I heard about it—so I contacted this gentleman: I said, I hear that you have papers that you want to start a post here. And he said, well, I've been trying to get... The guy said, I can't do it—so I don't know how I'm gonna do it. I said, well, would you mind if I tried to get the people? He was kind-of (inaudible) – He says, well, you can try it if you want to. I had thought that he [thought] that I wasn't gonna do it, you-know. At the time I wasn't working. I was getting some money... I forget what it was... it was like 20 or 30 dollars a week for 52 weeks, 52/20... I didn't apply for that... But anyway, I started; so I bought big cardboards, and crayons and everything else. And at that time I was going to Valley College; I was trying to do a lot of things at the same time. So anyway, I bought those things and I started printing on them: Veterans! Attention! – We are trying to organize an American Legion post in South Colton - on so-and-so date, please attend! So I went to the merchants in South Colton, I went to Cervantes, I went to El Sombrero, I went to the little street up in South Colton: 5 stores. I said would you mind if I put this thing in your window? They said go ahead, go ahead. So, of course, I went to the American Legion 155, and I said, I don't have anywhere to meet. Well you can meet here, so they gave me – for one night, they gave me the hall to meet.

So surprisingly, there was quite a bit of people there and I was really surprised. But the thing of it is they didn't have any money. They didn't want to quit drinking their beer at the end of the day. So I said, you know what? If 15 guys fill out... and you give me \$2.50, I'll put \$2.50 to make it \$5 dollars. If you could just give me \$2.50. [But], I didn't have any money so I had to borrow it [from] somewhere to cover the [dues]. Luckily, I think all of them except 2 or 3 didn't pay me back but that's okay.

Dr. Rivera: So what was the name of your post? Was it the Fidel Hernandez Post? What was the name of the post?

Sal Ayala: Fidel Hernandez was the first Mexican-American from South Colton to get killed in the Second World War; from Colton...

Dr. Rivera: Right, right...

Sal Ayala: So we named it after him...

Dr. Rivera: You're responsible for Fidel Hernandez Post, then? Yes, say yes.

Sal Ayala: Unofficially, I guess. But, nobody knows about that.

Dr. Rivera: You-know, Sal, you-know Francis, I've been trying to find out about the post, the Fidel Hernandez Post and I couldn't get any information. So...

Dean Caballero: He just told you.

Dr. Rivera: I know, I finally got it here in the interview.

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: Let me tell you something, and I think we all know this. There's something about us that keeps us from doing... I've been going to reunions. I go to reunions, my own reunion is Wilson, I go there and they won't talk to me. I go to Chavez Park, and I see all these people that went to school with me at Wilson and Garfield, and I had to get up and say: I'm Sal, I went to school with you. Yeah, I know, I know... So finally I tell her (to Francis), you know what, I don't know. After 50 years, I don't know why they do that anymore.

Dr. Rivera: Well, Sal, I'm delighted that you started the post, the Fidel Hernandez Post – one of the first veterans from Colton that got killed in World War II – that's great.

Now tell me, how was it growing up in a segregated community? How was it growing up in a segregated community in Colton? Colton was segregated...

Francis Ayala: (She asks Sal) How was it? Was there a difference... they didn't like the Mexican people in Colton. How was it for you? How was it when it was segregated when you were growing up? You came to the show, you better get home before its dark...

Sal Ayala: Oh the class discrimination?

Dr. Rivera: Yes.

Sal Ayala: Well it was understood – there wasn't anything in writing. But every day after 9 o'clock no Mexican-American kids would be north of the railroad tracks.

Dr. Rivera: 9 p.m.?

Sal Ayala: 9 o'clock you go back. The chief of police, Chief Hobbs, hoisted my bike; and I was working at the... Southern Pacific, and I was going back... and he was a police guard, he wasn't a chief there; [but] he stopped me [and said]: What are you doing!? [I said], I'm going home. [He said] Well you know it's after 9 o'clock and you shouldn't have been over there. [I said], I'm working over there at the package house. [He said], okay, get back over there.

Dr. Rivera: And what other incidents did you experience, Sal? What other incidents of discrimination did you experience growing up in South Colton?

Sal Ayala: Mostly, to me it was the attitudes that hurt me; it was the attitudes that were there—I know that it was there... the body language was the one thing that hurt me more, you-know.

And so, when I came back from the war, I said, you-know what? This is the United States of America and I was born here, and I deserve every right that this country gives; and nobody's gonna do this to me anymore.

I remember the salesmen, the Anglo salesmen that used to go to South Colton, and used to knock on the door. My mom used to open the door, my dad was working, we were small – those guys would open up, go inside and sit down in there when they were selling their wares. And there was no communication; and I'd say: What city do you come from? What's his kind doing here? He came in—he just came in... and so whatever he was selling, they'd give him 50 cents or whatever, and they'd leave.

That's the thing that hurt me... you-know, every time I see a salesman it reminds me of that.

Dr. Rivera: What about going to the theatre, the show, the New Colton...?

Sal Ayala: ...Segregated. The one's on the left was for the Mexican-Americans or Mexicans; and it was just one section, 3/4ths of it was the Anglos, even though if it was empty – because during the depression nobody had any money, you-know. Even the Anglos didn't have any money, some of them. So they had a whole bunch of... they had cushion seats, arms was high... and the owner was a Jewish guy, Mr. Myers, you remember?

Dr. Rivera: Yes I do, yes I do.

Sal Ayala: So, that was discrimination.

Dr. Rivera: What about other forms of discrimination, Sal? How about in school? I know that we were in a Mexican school in the Mexican part of town. How was any discrimination in our schools: Garfield or Wilson?

Sal Ayala: Have you seen the books at the beginning of the school year? The books were old books. Every once in a while we would get new books. But every year, over there—new books every year over there. I guess their books...

(He motions that the old books were given or recycled to the Mexican schools).

Francis Ayala: Rejects...

Dr. Rivera: Well, the other thing is services to South Colton. I know Maple Street was a dirt road back then. I know 'O' Street, where I lived, was a dirt road...

Sal Ayala: Oh, yes, it wasn't paved. Maple Street, Walnut Street... were dirt... no sewers.

Francis Ayala: But you paid for them. My mother-in-law was charged for the sewer and she was not connected to the sewer.

Sal Ayala: No sewers. But when I came back I went to the city, and I said: you-know, my parents have been there since 1906 and they're paying city taxes, county taxes, state taxes since 1906 – we don't have any sewers, we don't have any curbs, we don't have any pavement...

Dr. Rivera: Or street lights, we did not have street lights either – yeah...

Sal Ayala: So I said, okay. So I went to the county and I saw the sanitation officer—he was a doctor—I forgot his name, I think it was Dr. Colson. And I said: I wanna see the sanitation doctor from the county. So he came, he came to the counter and I said: Sir, my name is so-and-so and I live in South Colton, and I went to the city and I tried to get a petition for the city to put in cement walks and sewers and to fix up the place, and they told me that they didn't have any money. But every house has a hole in the ground for toilet facilities. What do you think that that water down there is...?

(Inaudible)... and all that stuff. So what are you gonna do? They told me they didn't

have any money. He said what's your name? And I guess he called Colton because about 3-4 months later, they started putting in the sewers.

Dr. Rivera: Sal, you're quite a guy.

Sal Ayala: ...That was in... When did I get home? (He asks Francis) 1946, 47... 1948.

Dr. Rivera: They shouldn't have sent you to war they should've kept you home.

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, so...very, very basic services that the city should provide.

What about schooling, Sal? Any problems with schools?

Sal Ayala: To me, something happened to me in the 6th grade – when the 5th grade got transferred to Lincoln they had segregated the second half of the 5th grade. But the next year, they said boys and girls, [it was] Mr. Snyder, boys and girls next year, [in] the 6th grade, you're gonna be in two 6th grade classes – so you're gonna be with English speaking students. And that was a shock to me...

Dr. Rivera: Why?

Sal Ayala: I felt intimidated because of my accent; and besides that, this is a secret, I stutter... And I don't know if you are stutterers here, but a stutterer – when you go before people like this, my heart starts pounding [and] I start sweating. Mrs. Hanfield was my teacher, and she really gave me the screws because my name is Ayala. Sally (inaudible) was the first one, Salvador was the second one. So every time that she wanted someone to get up and say something, Salvador will you... and here I am—I'm trying to (he motions with his mouth how he is having trouble speaking)... and later on I found out she enjoyed that. So I was tortured for the whole 6th grade.

Dr. Rivera: Let me get this straight: at 5th grade they took the kids from Garfield to Lincoln?

Sal Ayala: Yeah, to Lincoln School.

Dr. Rivera: For that one year?

Sal Ayala: In 1935...

Francis Ayala: ...They kept them together. The first year that class was together. The following year they integrated them to the other classes.

Sal Ayala: And now I think, in their mind they were trying to integrate to see what... I never had a legal opinion of that because, you-know, who cares? I thought it was an experiment that they wanted to do, and that was it. But, I told my girl, and you-know, my oldest girl is a teacher now. And the other one went to UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) but, you-know, she got married and I think she's in Seattle right now. She is employed by the Ben Bridge Jewelers in their headquarters in Seattle. So she's over there in a meeting... But anyway, this is what happened to me, and at first I said, I can't believe a teacher would do that... but they did it—because they did it to me. I can swear on the Bible what happened to me, and so can those kids that were there. Sally (? – last name), and one of the principals of one of the schools in Colton—he was there. McIntosh... the guy from high school was there; so they know—they know what happened. The reason I'm doing this is because I've gone to Stutterers—I joined the Stutterers Association, it's a natural thing. You face your devils, you gotta do it, no matter how much it costs you, but it's cost me a lot.

Dr. Rivera: Talking about devils, you left the service, what year did you leave the service, '45-'46?

Sal Ayala: Well me, I left in January 22nd, 1948.

Dr. Rivera: Okay, '48. Now, Sal, how did you get the job with the post office?

Sal Ayala: I was living in East Los Angeles... at the time with my brother, I was staying with my brother. I was working at the L.A. County Hospital at that time. I was in the communicable disease unit, and I used to go to the post office and mail letters, and there was a Mexican-American working there in [the] East Los Angeles Station with a white shirt and a tie. And I thought, you-know, I'd like to do that, but I didn't know how hard it was in Colton to try to get or even ask to get a job. Just, oh-no... (Not clear)

Dr. Rivera: Wait, you went to the Colton Post Office and asked for an application?

Sal Ayala: Yeah, I knocked on the door in Colton... I saw Cliff Ham, the politician, so I said, I'd like to have an application – to find employment in their post office department, then. [He said,] we don't have applications, anyway, we don't have any openings.

So Francis was working at a beauty shop in the Arcade Building in Colton.

Dr. Rivera: Yes, I remember that, yeah.

Sal Ayala: She knew the wife and the mother there...

Francis Ayala: I knew his [Cliff Ham's] wife and his mother. I used to do their hair.

Dr. Rivera: Okay.

Sal Ayala: So he [Cliff Ham] said I'll ask my wife to give you an application, so he got an application to her (he points to Francis). So I filled it out, and I went to San Bernardino [to put] it in, and I went to San Francisco, and then, I was on the register. I by-passed them [the process or the system].

So, I took the examination and I passed it, and then it showed preferences of the post offices that had openings – so I said I want Colton – and when I got it, they didn't know how I got in. And for one year you're temporary, they can let you off anytime. They tried every-which-way to fire me. They gave me the worst job; I was working inside... They gave me the worst jobs... I said I'm not gonna quit; and they tried and tried...

Francis Ayala: Let me tell you, Tom, when they called him, eventually, in Colton, Cliff Ham was still the postmaster. And he said, well you'll have to carry mail. I said, no Cliff, he's not gonna carry mail. And he says, what do you mean? That's his job. I said, no, he's too small to be carrying mail in those big leather bags; I said, he's not gonna carry mail, he's gonna work inside. He looked at me, and I said, that's right he's gonna work inside—there's an opening. And so, he always teased me: he's not gonna work outside. Well, every-now-and-then, when they were short-handed he did go out. Sure enough by the time he came back he had purple marks where his skin had broken from carrying those big bags. But he always teased me: he's not gonna work outside; I said that's right he's not.

Dr. Rivera: So you by-passed the process, and got in through, you-know, not going through the Colton office. They assigned you to Colton, and then, you're on probation for one year, and they tried to do everything they can to fire you. Yeah, but you said, *no aquí me voy a quedar*, I'm staying here.

Sal Ayala: But in the post office, I don't know if you know, but inside the post office they got all kinds of... talking about an NSA (National Security Agency) now... They had glass things (Sal is pointing up around the ceiling of the room)... You don't know when the inspector is gonna be there watching you... watching you everywhere because they do steal money – people do steal money – you-know, we're human beings. And-so, they tried every-which-way [to] leave something there so you could try to get it...

Dr. Rivera: They set you up. They tried to set you up...

Sal Ayala: Because they're having thousands of dollars every day, you-know...

Dr. Rivera: How long did you work for the post office?

Sal Ayala: I worked there thirty-three and a half years.

Dr. Rivera: Thirty-three and a half years?

Sal Ayala: Yeah.

Dr. Rivera: And Francis, you said you worked too. Where did you [work]?

Francis Ayala: I worked in the beauty shop; but before he gets off of that—the post office, the last time when he retired, talking of discrimination: there was a gentleman that was in the service, [he] got out, and he got off working for the post office. He made his life (pointing to Sal) miserable and I thought he was gonna have a nervous breakdown. At one time he got so bad, [he] went to the doctor... he just had to get out because he was pushing, pushing, and pushing, you-know. He was one of those—I don't know if he was from the south or where in the heck he was, but he was a miserable man, to the point that he made Sal, and other people very close in losing their whole retirement. Téo Duarte was one of them...

So, even after he worked in the post office for many years, he still ended up being mistreated because of one individual, not because of what the organization is supposed to be—because they allowed somebody to do their own thing... And unfortunately, the postmaster was even Mexican—you'd think that he would have looked after him/them, but he didn't.

Dr. Rivera: So it was very difficult to work there for all the Mexicans, Mexican-Americans that were there?

Sal Ayala: Well, I wouldn't say all of them because in thirty-three years the young incoming kids they had [a] college education... they were more savvy. But the older guys, like us, you-know, we're set in our ways because we came from the depression. We came from nothing — to this ...to me it was an accomplishment...

Dr. Rivera: It was...

Sal Ayala: I had a job, I could save money, I bought the house, you-know; I had to pay for it for 30 years but I finally... so I was pretty lucky.

I was luckier than my father. I think he was working for the WPA in 1937 for 44 cents an hour, no overtime, no health, just 44 cents an hour.

Dr. Rivera: Well, you were a trailblazer, a pioneer in working in jobs that were not open to us back then, *verdad?*

Francis & Sal Ayala: Yes.

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, that's what it was. Francis, you said that you worked also, tell us about your...

Francis Ayala: Yes. I worked as a beautician thirty-six years. My first job, it was in San Bernardino – and [I was] being mistreated by one of my own. The lady that hired me, her daughter [or] her sister, unfortunately, committed suicide so she didn't show up for work. The lady that was working there had me do work, which I was there for, but she was crediting herself – we were paid fifty percent of what we made. So she was putting all the work on her column. So I want you to know that I ended up that week... she dared [to pay] me \$4.50, and I told her as a beautician you know that that's not correct, she couldn't have possibly done all the work without me helping her, or doing part of the work. I said, so you can keep the \$4.25; I said, I can go work as a laborer anywhere and make more than that. Eventually, she mailed a check to me. She said give me a chance, I'll be alright. Okay. I left.

Then, I came to the arcade, I worked for Gladys Marie Oldmeyer, and she hired me; but one of the ladies that worked there with her, [who] was also a beautician, asked her: How dare you lower this shop by hiring a Mexican?

Dr. Rivera: What year was that, Francis?

Francis Ayala: That was in '45.

Dr. Rivera: Okay.

Francis Ayala: And... the sad part of it [is] she had been married to a Mexican. So that's why she was bitter towards us.

And then from there, I worked for that lady for nine years. [I] went to Riverside because the business was slow, and then [I] came back to Colton, again. Totally, I worked as a beautician for thirty-six years. I worked for Frances Donnelly, as well.

I had beautiful experience[s], it helped me grow because I saw totally the outside – other side of the world. Although my parents took us out to a lot of places, I had more opportunities in the fact we would travel; we'd go to Los Angeles, we would have a lot of [fun] eating out at restaurants, and so forth.

But I worked there for 36 years. I had a lot of beautiful friends. I still have some of those ladies that I originally started working with that are my friends. And, I was able to help my brothers because we were a large family. Your kids, my kids, and our kids; so there was a total of 12 of us. And by working, I was able to help some of the second to the oldest in the family.

And also, we ended up buying a house within a block from the shop. Afterwards, [we] moved on Rancho and 'C' – there was a little shopping center there [with a] grocery store, [a] liquor store, and the beauty shop. So I ended up buying in that area. Also by being there, I met this lady who her husband had property on Grant between 'C' and Olive. So they were saying...

Dr. Rivera: Is that North Colton?

Francis Ayala: In North Colton, yes. Everything in North Colton.

In the time being, when I was 21, I had bought a house in South Colton that I was renting out. But I wanted to live in this area, in North Colton, so that's when I went to this lady that her husband owned this land... inquiring about a lot because we wanted our dream. We didn't have any money but we were dreaming about building a house. And as we went up, the lady answered the door, and [I] introduced my husband, and I said that we were interested in buying one of the lots [and] we wondered how much they were. And she got real nervous; I said, oh, did I come at a bad time? I said, we can come later. No, no, no, she says, alright, come in, come in. But I could see the uneasiness on her. So she goes to the phone to call her husband, who at that time we had a judge in Colton, I've been trying to but I can't remember his name, I remember the lady that worked for him: Mrs. Carter. And she says to her husband: Honey, here is that young Mexican girl that does my hair, you-know, the little Mexican girl that does my hair? It clicked on right away, Mexican! I know where you're going. She said, he would like to speak to you. I said, okay. He said, I understand you're interested in one of my lots, he said, but I'm sorry I can't sell it. I said, you can't sell it, you don't know whether I can afford it or not, why can't you sell it? Well, I think it would be best if you would buy in South Colton, I think you'd be much happier. I said, I don't think you need to worry about my happiness. He said, well, I think it would be best. He said, you understand, I have to think that I cannot depreciate my land. If I sell to you, it will depreciate. I said, what?!! I said, you're a judge, judging people with an attitude like that; I think you're in the wrong profession. I said, just for that, I will make a point to never live in South Colton just to prove to you that I don't have to. My husband fought for this country, and we have every right that you have and maybe even more because he fought for it.

So, we left there. Of course, he was upset, I was upset too; and later on, we bought this house where we live at 805 Valencia Drive. But then too, Mr. Grooms didn't know whether to sell it because on that street there was no Mexicans, and he was afraid that the neighbors would object. We had this friend of ours who was a real estate man, Mr. Helman, who through him, some of my brothers had bought property already. And he

convinced Mr. Grooms and Mrs. Grooms to sell to us because he was qualified, my husband was qualified to get a loan through the state because of being a veteran and having an honorable discharge; and they would get paid in full. He said, but I want payments so that I can have an income. And Mr. Henman said to them, if you take this full amount... push the houses over \$10,000. And he said, you can invest it all at one time and you'd be money ahead. Finally, he agreed to it. And so, we didn't have the money; the state wanted \$3,000, so my parents lent us the \$3,000 for the down payment. And we never spent, other than buying groceries and paying the utilities, [we] never bought anything extra until we paid my parents off – because that's the kind of man my husband is. Right or wrong, it's only right... So, that's how we ended up there.

But then, up the street I used to do this lady's hair, and she informed me: Us here on Valencia choose our friends. We don't just go having coffee with anybody. And I told her, Ms. Shawl, I'm glad to understand that because I can enjoy my coffee by myself. Fine. I also choose my friends – believe me, I was taught that very young, be careful who your friends are or who you call a friend. But I said, as far as I'm concerned, we all live on mortgage lane, or is your house paid for? She said, no we're paying on it. So time went on, and they were gonna to have a family picture taken, she had to come knocking at my door and ask me a favor. The shop where I worked was closed for a month. My boss had gone back to Indiana, they drove. So she says, Francis we are having a family portrait taken of the family, and I want my mother's hair done, and she refuses to go to anybody but you. Would you be so kind as come to my house and do her hair for this picture? I said, I'll be more than delighted, she's my friend, I like her, she's very kind to me. So I did it. So you see, it doesn't pay to throw stones 'cause sooner or later it comes back to you, you-know.

Then, across the street from us some homes were built, my brother had built a house there too. And then, Angel Garcia, you-know, lived farther down the street – that's where the three Mexicans and my brother, Miguel and us...

The house directly across the street was built and stood idle for a long time. And this colored couple bought it, and they made the bad mistake, you-know, like every couple, we're excited when we get into our home. The yard was full of grass, weeds – they

came real quickly, and [they] went to the city hall to open the water and electricity 'cause the house was dusty and never been lived in – and [they] were pulling weeds, and so forth. And the neighbors down the street had the nerve to call me and ask me, would you sign a petition? I said, for what? I don't just put my name on anything. I said, what is the petition of? She said, it's about those people that bought across from you – you-know, their colored people. I said, so. She says, well we don't want them in the neighborhood. Someone from the city hall called this person on Valencia to let them know... I said, why? Is that what you were writing... getting a petition for us too? I said, if they have the money, they have the right to own it. So I wouldn't sign anything.

But you know what? They never moved in so somehow they got them out.

Dr. Rivera: Well, tell us about the Cervantes situation, also. Ralph Cervantes.

Francis Ayala: Oh, Ralph Cervantes. Well, he was first to buy property in North Colton.

Dr. Rivera: He was also a World War II Veteran.

Francis & Sal Ayala: World War II Veteran, yes.

Francis Ayala: And he was buying next to the Armen's; and the Armen's didn't want them there. And so they fought it, they went to court, and they listed it there in Colton. And they hired lawyers and the Cervantes' were forced to find a lawyer. And [they] said: Well, we don't mind him living there 'cause he's a veteran, but she's from Mexico. But she was a graduate from the University of Mexico—she was no dummy—she had more education than a lot of us. And there was a discussion in the city hall about it and they met several times. And they got an interpreter because, [of] course, Mrs. Cervantes just spoke Spanish. And the lawyer turns around and tells the interpreter: I'm sorry I can't interpret word-by-word, she's using words that I've never heard and

[I'm] not familiar with – because she was so well educated. So they finally let 'em be, but they had a struggle. Ours was not as bad as theirs, of course.

Dr. Rivera: Did they get the house, after all?

Francis Ayala: They got the house, yes. And, the Armen, I understand, Mrs. Cervantes told me later on he apologized to them. But he put them through all that unnecessary experience, you-know.

But the same thing even in high school, when my brother, one of them was going to school...but we had several but, this particular one was going... So they called us in; well, my Mother didn't speak English and didn't understand it either, so I went with my Dad, with my step-father. Mr. McIntosh wanted to inform my Father that my brother was dating—they thought, [but] she was just a friend, a white girl. And my Father said, or step-father said, has he been rude...? What is it? [Mr. McIntosh] said, but don't you see? She's white. And [my step-father] said, yes, but look at my son, he's light so they attract to each other. Plus, they're in school they're not getting married. Well, I thought you would like to know. [My step-father said,] I don't think you need to inform me.

My brother dated many girls after that but, it was the idea – he is not good enough for this girl obviously.

Dr. Rivera: And Sal was talking about attitude that hurt him. I think that was the general attitude of the high school, and the people that work at the high school – that this was not gonna happen.

Francis Ayala: That's right. And that's when we made sure for our daughter's – they had every right anybody had in this world. As long as they led a straight life, fortunately.

But you know what? We only had our girls in public school for kindergarten. And then they went to Catholic school. When the school closed, the oldest girl went to Saint Bernardines; they graduated from Aquinas, and graduated from the University of Santa

Clara – all through Catholic school. Our second daughter went to kindergarten... but anyway, she went into Catholic school up to the 6th grade, I believe. 7th and 8th, she went to Holy Rosary, then to Aquinas, and [she] attended UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) – she didn't graduate, but she attended UCLA.

So we tried to expose them to a different life: they had piano lessons, they had ballet dances, all [were] registered in the library, [they] played sports, [and] we discussed politics with them—if we were in the mood, literature, or so forth. So, we wanted them to have opportunities that we didn't have.

Dr. Rivera: Are they married now?

Francis Ayala: Both married to brothers. Our oldest daughter has two children. The oldest girl graduated from Long Beach State (California State University, Long Beach), her boy is in the film business.

Our youngest daughter has five children. The oldest one is working on his Ph.D., the second one has her master's, [and] she's a baseball coach. The next one is a music major [who] graduated from Fullerton (California State University, Fullerton); the next one graduated from Berkeley (University of California, Berkeley); [and] the next one is going to Mt. SAC (Mount San Antonio College).

Dr. Rivera: Congratulations, congratulations.

Francis Ayala: And we feel that every time we see the name of a Mexican-American graduating from high school or college, of course, we feel: Thank God, a little bit of our efforts and hardships is going up, it's getting better...

Sal Ayala: We're very proud, we're very proud of you guys.

Dr. Rivera: I was gonna mention, in making the shift a little bit, Sal, were you a rock thrower at the bureaucracy? Were you an activist? Did you promote social justice in

the community of Colton? I would imagine you did... You got people involved in politics; you helped people run for office...

(Francis repeats a question to Sal): Were you involved in social justice?

Sal Ayala: Yes, I was always in the background because I couldn't speak. [Public] speaking... I was always in the background, I always helped.

Dr. Rivera: Did you help candidates get elected to office? Did you help people get into office?

Sal Ayala: We helped Ruben Ayala from, you-know, Chino – we helped him, yeah.

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, he was on the board of supervisors for San Bernardino County. And you helped him?

Francis Ayala: That's when he was elected. We had tea parties, [and] we had meetings at our home... Some of the city employees that worked on the counsel... [we had] some of them in our home, too.

Dr. Rivera: What about [anybody] like Pete Luque, or Pasqual Oliva or Abe Beltran any of those folks ever ask you for help?

Francis Ayala: No, I don't know.
(Francis repeats the names to Sal)

Sal Ayala: The one that I got involved [with] was the first councilman... Johnny Martinez.

Dr. Rivera: Yes, [in] '41. 1941, 42, yeah.
Francis and Sal, how about school issues? Like some of the things that were happening in the school district. Did you get involved with Sonny Abril

Francis Ayala: I didn't but he (Sal) got involved with some of his...

Sal Ayala: At the beginning in the '60s when they started... we got involved.

Francis Ayala: I stayed home with my kids.

I remember a remark made about [him]... it came out in the paper... [they] couldn't understand his opinion towards the city or towards the school system – when we didn't have our kids in Catholic school, [or] we didn't have our kids in public school. But nevertheless, we were paying taxes so we had interest because our money was being spent. Because we weren't a fly-by-night, we were here to stay...

So he had every right to express and focus [his] experience [on] wanting justice for all the kids.

Dr. Rivera: I do remember him being very active in trying to work with issues that affected our kids in the public school.

Francis Ayala: (Asking Sal). What was that program you were working on with Dr. Shirley and Frances?

Sal Ayala: Well, yes. In the Lyndon Johnson administration... when those federal programs first came over, you had to have a program. So they went to Colton [and] said, you gotta have a program to get the federal funds. And we didn't have any... so where do we turn to...? So I knew Dr. Sterling, he was an M.D.... I don't know how I got to... but the lady, Frances, her name was Frances in Social Services in San Bernardino; I went to talk to her. I said, you-know, we [need] to file for federal programs. I introduced myself, of course: I live in South Colton, I was born in South Colton... (inaudible). People in South Colton want federal programs for our kids, but we don't have anybody to help us. And so, she's the one, Frances, I forgot her last name, but she was there for a long time – [a] social services lady, single lady, [and] very nice, [a] professional lady. So she called, she was friends with Dr. Sterling; so

they said okay, we'll help you. So, Dr. Sterling, [after] work at night, [and] Frances used to go to South Colton to the Caldera building on 7th Street, and they started the program, they started writing the program. When they finished, it was about this thick (he uses his hands to show about a half foot thick/high). I think they spent 3 months, 5 days a week at night. Sometimes we'd go up to 10 o'clock at night. I don't know but, we were very lucky that we did. So they did the program. They said, we don't want our names in anything, you're the ones that are going to present this... they presented it, and they passed it, and they got their funds.

Up until now, I think this is the first time that [we've discussed what happened.]

Dr. Rivera: Well, I know that both of you, Sal, were very active in just issues that affected Colton. So I know that he was very involved with those things.

Francis and Sal, have we covered everything about the positive things that you've done in your life? I know I didn't mention something like: When you were young and growing up, what did you guys do for entertainment?

Francis Ayala: For entertainment?

Dr. Rivera: Yeah.

Francis Ayala: (Asks Sal). What did you do for entertainment?

Sal Ayala: Games that we used to play? Marbles.

Dr. Rivera: *Canicas, canicas.*

Sal Ayala: *Canicas.* And the... (inaudible) ...and you have a stiff wire... and the tires—old tires... and you go to the hills... and you go down... We made our own games. The kites, we used to make the kites [with] paper and everything. There was no money, at least, in our house.

Dr. Rivera: Right, right. So you made your own games? Llantas? Old tires?

Sal Ayala: Yeah, remember they used to go... (He tries to show how the game with tires is played). Rolling...

Dr. Rivera: How about *resorteras*, slingshots?

Francis Ayala: He still has one.

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: We cut the wood, you-know, like this (He shows with his hands). Put the rubber... use the inner-tube... cut it... kill the birds. You-know, I'm ashamed to say, remember there was a lot of horny-toads in South Colton, I killed a lot of those horny-toads.

Dr. Rivera: In the Santa Ana River? The Santa Ana River?

Sal Ayala: We went to the river, yeah.

Francis Ayala: (Asks Sal) But where did you kill the horny-toads?

Sal Ayala: Well, if you go to the backyard, you-know, by the railroad tracks there was a little stream during the Winter time and they used to come out by the Winter time and I used to kill them.

Dr. Rivera: Yeah. Sal, what about swimming? Swimming, did you guys go to the Santa Ana? Los Caninos?

Sal Ayala: I'm a non-swimmer, and I joined the Navy

(Laughter)

Sal Ayala: And I'll tell you a story about that. During the Second World War, I said, I want to join the Navy but I can't swim. And I read in the paper that a British warship got sunk by the Germans and the only survivor out of those 5 thousand crewmen was a non-swimmer. And you know how he did it? He found a piece of lumber and he clung to it. Well the people that used to swim I guess they were very confident; but they were there for 1 or 2 days and they finally... drowned. That non-swimmer clung to that piece of wood, and he survived.

Dr. Rivera: So he was your hero...

(Laughter)

Dr. Rivera: Mr. Caballero do you have any questions...?

Dean Caballero: Just a follow up question on the programs that were brought in through the grant proposal that was written. What kind of programs were brought in? Do you remember? What kind of educational programs were brought in through the proposal that you helped to...?

(Francis repeats portions of the question to Sal)

Francis Ayala: They were done for the school system, and Colton used that.

Dean Caballero: But I'm wondering what they used the money for?

(Francis asks Sal what they used the money for)

Sal Ayala: I really can't remember what they used it for, but they got money from the federal government.

Francis Ayala: (Francis asks Sal). You know who also was involved in that was Beatrice? Was she involved in that?

Dr. Rivera: Oh, Bea...

Francis Ayala: She took over afterwards. See after all this was done they pushed him out again, like in the American Legion.

Dr. Rivera: Oh Bea was involved with those activities.

Francis Ayala: But she came in after it was all done. She was a big cheese after that.

Dr. Rivera: Yes, I remember her... Educational programs...

Dean Caballero: Yeah, we'll follow up with her tutoring, bilingual programs, maybe. I'm wondering if part of it was bilingual education. That was about the beginning... those were the years when bilingual education... some people were experimenting with it. I'm just wondering...

Francis Ayala: Which I don't believe in.

Dean Caballero: Yeah, well...

Dr. Rivera: Yeah. But you have a picture that you brought, Sal, a picture of your mom and dad there. Tell us about the picture.

(Dean Caballero moves the picture over to Sal and Dr. Rivera, and Dr. Rivera asks Sal to turn it toward the camera)

Sal Ayala: That was when they got their citizenship papers.

(The Camera zooms in on the picture)

Sal Ayala: When they were gonna get their citizenship papers, that's 50 years after my Dad came to the United States. Francis took them to the Superior Court...

Francis Ayala: No, I filled out their forms because neither of them had immigration papers. They didn't need it at the time; so I filled out the form for them for their immigration, and then they went to, I think it was Wilson or Garfield, to classes. And then, that picture I took in front of our house the day they were gonna take their oath.

Dr. Rivera: Oh, good. Okay. And Francis, what year was this? Do you remember?

Francis Ayala: That was in 1951.

Dr. Rivera: Now, Francis and Sal, did I miss anything that you want to mention in our session today? Did I miss anything? We talked about where your parents came from; we talked about being in the military service, and developing an attitude that "I paid my dues"; we talked about getting a job at the post office; we talked about your family, your girls; we talked about you getting your house, they didn't want it but, you getting your house.

The wonderful experience that you've had, not only living in a segregated community, but also, being able to move to the north-side of Colton; and kind of just being there, for how many years now?

Francis Ayala: We lived in that home for 60 years.

Dr. Rivera: 60 year now?

Francis Ayala: Yeah, we moved there on our 3rd wedding anniversary. We've been married 63 years...

Dr. Rivera: Congratulations. So, did I miss anything?

Sal Ayala: Well, there's one comment that I want to make. When you asked us the other day if we would come here, I thought, [and] I thought what I would say. I said, well, I'll leave it up to God.

But there's one thing I want to bring up: I thought to myself, my thought will be 90% of my parents – that what they gave me by coming to the United States. I can't be more appreciative that they did that because they gave us an opportunity. Even though it was hard, yes, but at least they were here for our case to have it easier. For my daughter to graduate from Santa Clara (Santa Clara University – SCU); for my youngest daughter to be right now in Seattle talking with heads of Ben Bridge Jewelers, whose got over 70 jewelry shops in the United States. And chances are that from now on she's gonna go up because she's been working there for 3 years.

According to the employees there, the one from Brea...

(Sal's discourse is not clear at this point because he is emotional. But I think he's trying to say that the Ben Bridge family does not discriminate or show prejudice against Mexican-Americans. His daughter including other employees communicate with the Ben Bridge family. He is especially proud because his daughter represents the pride of South Colton).

Dr. Rivera: Well, thank you very much – both of you.

Francis Ayala: I want to tell you that I think I agree with Sal about our parents because we owe them a great deal. I told my daughter when she went away to the university, I said: *Mija*, on your shoulders goes a lot of responsibility. I said, my mother and my father left their home. My mother never [saw] her mother again; so we could have a better life. When my father died, my mother could have gone back, but because of her children to have a better opportunity—we stayed. When my little brother was found dead, it was on the 2nd of November, I don't remember what election, but in her confusion... finding her son dead, she would say: Did you go vote? And I thought to myself, she loved this country so – that's she's concerned about us exercising our right to vote; even if her heart is broken. She just her son dead a few minutes ago... And so, for that I think we owe our parents a great deal for their sacrifices. And we have a great responsibility also, to live a clean life and to try to be an example for our children. It's very difficult sometimes but you have to hang on. Thank you.

Dr. Rivera: Well, thank both of you – we certainly thank you very, very sincerely for being with us today.

Dean Caballero: Yes, thank you very much. We appreciate your comments. We're glad to have [this] documented for future generations.

Dr. Rivera: Well, again, thank you. And we'll just keep in touch. If anything comes up we'll do it again.

Sal Ayala: I'll tell you something, personally. When I remember you as a high school student, as a college student – and I said, this guy is gonna make it. I thought, he's gonna make it. We used to go to the Van Aikens...

Dr. Rivera: Oh, that's right – ah, that's right. Remember that Lily? (Dr. Rivera asks his wife, who is off camera). The Van Aiken Scholarship that we started? That was back in '65, '66, '67.

Dean Caballero: Who is Van Aken?

Dr. Rivera: Van Aken was one of the families, Colton families that lived in South Colton. They lived on Congress, on Congress Street.

Francis Ayala: That's where I remember you from... I know there was a young lady with him. (Francis asks Lily, who is off camera). Were you there too? I know there was a young lady with him. You were working on... we went to a fundraiser for college I think you created.

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, we created a scholarship. Yeah, Van Aiken was a kind of a Padrinos. The Van Aikens, he was from... some place – but he was a Native American. They had sons and one daughter, Mary. Mary married Garcia, the pilot you were talking about. Anyway, they were people that helped us create a baseball team,

they would sponsor the baseball team, they would take us to the beach, and, you-know, do all kinds of things for us when we were growing up.

Francis Ayala: Very generous people...

Dean Caballero: What was the name of the baseball team? Was that the beginning of the Mercury's?

Dr. Rivera: No, the Mercury's started 1939. The Colton Mercury's started in 1939. And then, you know where 'N' Street and 8th Street – La Cadena? That's where they played their first game, in that empty lot there...

Dean Caballero: Do you remember the name of the team that you're talking about?

Dr. Rivera: Oh, our team was just kind of a pick-up-kind-of-a neighborhood kids. We were from La Paloma. We didn't talk about the Barrios... La Paloma– yeah!

Sal Ayala: That's for another time...

(Laughter)

Dean Caballero: We may have to do another session...

Dr. Rivera: Ernie Garcia has a good handle on the Barrios...

Dean Caballero: We'll do another session – talk about the Barrios and some of the other things. Sounds good.

Francis Ayala: We are at a gathering one time, and they kept saying [something] about Cumino Beach. I had trouble through my parents and us [having] traveled through coast, and I remembered I had never been to that beach... Finally, I said, [where's] that beach? I've never been to it... and Sal said, no you haven't been... and

then the other lady said, we can tell you're not a native. I still didn't know what they were talking about.

Dr. Rivera: You-know, the Santa Ana River... So the Riverside freeway came through Colton through La Cadena. And then, over the bridge, you-know, they had a bridge that the Santa Ana River would go under. And then next to the west side of the bridge was a little area that was Cumino Beach.

(Laughter)

Dean Caballero: On the side of the river... That's great...

(Laughter)

Francis Ayala: You-know, I feel bad about Colton. To tell you the truth, I didn't like Colton. When I lived in Fontana, and my parents would [go] shopping in San Bernardino, and I'd always tell my Dad, don't go through Colton. By the time we went there everything was closed on Saturday. It looked so depressed, and it was quiet, and all I remember is there was a big pair of coveralls hanging on the store of Willets—and they would swing... I liked it when we got there early because they had a dime store [that] had really nice material to embroidery and I could get a lot of things there, and I was the only girl so... I was spoiled and I could get all the things I needed. And my Mother said, okay, it keeps her busy. But as I've lived here, you-know, now we're gonna be buried here, I've noticed that there is a lot of history; and I'm not a writer, by no means, but I think we've lost a great deal because there was the Padillas that had a lot of history—that knew about their history. And then, the Guerreros were related to all sorts of people—a lot of those older people have died that had a lot of information.

Dr. Rivera: That's why I'm delighted that Cesar started the project. Out of the blue, he said: Why don't we do a project on South Colton? Then we just started to do the project—that's why we're trying very, very hard to get as many people as we can to come to the interviews because we get that information... I know we've missed a lot of

it; but better late than never. *Como es el dicho*. But, we'll try and see what we can pull up with this little project that we have going.

Dean Caballero: Maybe we can find some relatives of the Padillas and the Guerreros that might remember some of the oral history... and maybe they can recount it.

Francis Ayala: Remember Mrs. Davis [who] worked in the city hall for many, many years as the city clerk? She said she used to live in South Colton, at one time, and she would come, when there weren't that many Mexicans living there, and that she would walk down to the city hall to work. But I was gonna say, that gentleman that wouldn't sell her that lot, he's probably turning in his grave. That house that he owned... the son of one of my [God-children] is living in it – mostly all Mexican. Our street, there's just practically all are Mexican. But, we move in and they move out; I don't know where they're going to...

Dr. Rivera: Yeah, yeah, Yucaipa. Anyway, it's a good project and on Thursday, this coming Thursday at 1:30 p.m. we're gonna tape Abe Beltran and you-know, he was the second Mexican mayor in Colton. Pasqual Oliva was the first one and then Abe was the second one. And I want him to talk about Pete Luque, Johnny Martinez, and Pasqual Oliva; and I want him to talk about those experiences... And he was born and raised in Colton, too.

Francis Ayala: And his family before that was also from Mexico

Dr. Rivera: Yes, yes. So those are our plans. And you're kind of the... you were talking about your Mom and Dad being pioneers in coming here to this country. You guys are pioneers because you helped us start this project. *Los Pioneros!*

Dean Caballero: *Bueno. Muchas gracias.* Thank you.

Francis Ayala: You're welcome, sir

Dr. Rivera: Well, thank you for being with us today.

Dean Caballero: You're welcome, you're welcome. It was so interesting I decided to stay for the whole thing. I'll catch up on my work later... this is more interesting...

(Laughter)

Transcribed by Pat Ricé-Daniels, Library Services Specialist-1, Special Collections